

7

The Body in the Workhouse Death, Burial, and Belonging in Early Eighteenth-Century St Giles in the Fields

Tim Hitchcock

If you had strolled down Broad St Giles in London in late August or early September 1731, along the traditional route to Tyburn, you might have heard a ballad sung or chanted, to the tune of ‘Death and the Lady’.¹ The ballad was called *The Workhouse Cruelty* (see Figure 7.1), and it gave what purported to be a ‘full and true’ account of the death of Mrs Mary Whistle, who had recently died in the workhouse belonging to St Giles in the Fields, about 100 feet south in Vinegar Yard.

The ballad told of the cruelty visited on Mary Whistle by Matthew Marryott and his sister, Sarah Underhood—master and mistress of the workhouse.

Good Christian People all both far and near,
U to this true Relation lend an Ear,
Such Cruelty before ne’er was known
Enough to pierce a heart as hard as stone,
...
One Mrs. Mary Whistle as we hear,
Who was a housekeeper for many a year,
In St Giles in the Fields many does know,
But by misfortune was reduced so low,
That to the parish for relief she went
And to the Parish Workhouse she was sent.
Tho’ she to work before had ne’er been taught,
Yet there to card or spin she must be brought.

And so the ballad went on, describing the hard treatment Mary received, and how, in order to discipline her to work—to ‘work or starve’—she was confined to the ‘dark hole’ where she lay:

Half starved, eat up with vermin . . .
Holes in her legs her arms her hips and thighs,



Fig. 7.1. 'The Workhouse Cruelty' (1731) (British Library)

The Body in the Workhouse

155

And how after eleven weeks, she died there—an exemplar of the treatment that might be expected at the hands of the parish by even the most deserving of the parish poor.

But if by sad misfortune ever they
Should happen to fall into Decay
Small is their comfort, great will be their grief,
Since with such cruelty they give relief.

The ballad was accompanied by a broadside pamphlet called *The Workhouse Cruelty: Workhouses turn'd Goals, And Goalers Executioners*, which added ever more tortured flesh to the tale of Mary Whistle's treatment; detailing a series of earlier deaths in the workhouse associated particularly with the ill-treatment of decayed householders, and with the theft of body parts, and expanding on the ballad's account of the cruelties inflicted by Marryott.²

'Printed for Christian Love-poor near St, Giles Church', the ballad and broadside reflected a unique public outcry against the new parish workhouses that had sprung up in the wake of the 'Workhouse Test Act', passed eight years earlier in 1722/3.³ The ballad was headed by a set of six crude woodcuts depicting childbirth, fighting, begging, and murder, which do not appear to bear any direct relationship to the content below. Both the ballad and the broadside were produced on cheapest of paper, incorporating a semi-literate orthography.

These documents appear to represent a voice 'from below'; an impression reinforced by contemporary reaction to the campaign:

That this whole affair has been carry'd on in a very extraordinary and unusual manner . . . by spreading abroad, with the utmost art and industry, at Geneva Houses, and other places, many false and malicious reports, and printing Ballads, Half-penny Papers and other paragraphs in News-papers, with very false and malicious accounts . . . to raise a clamour and spirit in the parish against the Work-house . . .⁴

In addition to giving voice to the politics of a wider community than is normally reflected in the print culture of this date, the campaign was also remarkably successful in its primary objective. Despite a parish inquiry reporting that there was no substance to the complaints, Matthew Marryott was dismissed from his position at St Giles within weeks. He died in January of the following year.⁵

This chapter explores the social tensions revealed by these two documents, and seeks to explain the micro-politics that gave rise to the campaign. In the process it argues that the creation of a new system of parish workhouses was part of a wider re-creation of the social, cultural, and political geography of the parishes of London resulting from a combination of the policies of the 'Commissions for Building Fifty New Churches' and the related evolution of a more directly 'justice-led' form of parish government. It argues that by engaging directly with the sensitivities of a new cultural geography, the *Cruelty* helped force the parishes of London to take a first step in transforming their new-built workhouses from institutions of labour discipline to sites of medical and social care.⁶ In the process, it seeks to engage both with the theme of this volume—suffering and happiness—and with the

development of a new commitment to ‘improvement’ of the sort that Paul Slack’s work has done so much to illuminate—and which is exemplified in the example of the parish workhouse movement of the early eighteenth century.⁷ By exploring how one community of poverty sought to preserve an older notion of charity and belonging, this chapter suggests that the rise of ‘happiness’ and ‘improvement’ as an end of governance brought with it the seeds of conflict and denigration, and how appeals to an older notion of both suffering and community continued to serve as a powerful political tool.

ST GILES IN THE FIELDS

Twenty years prior to Mary Whistle’s death, the parish of St Giles in the Fields seemed to exemplify all the problems that beset the growing metropolis. One of a series of overpopulated and poor extramural parishes that encircled the old City, St Giles comprised a fat L-shape of dense housing, encompassing the major thoroughfare of High Holborn, running east to west, and the wealthy urban squares of Lincoln’s Inn Fields, Red Lion Square, and Bloomsbury Square. It also contained the notorious districts around Seven Dials with its Rag Fair, Drury Lane with its theatres and prostitutes, and Tottenham Court Road with its Gooseberry Fair, dust heaps, and builders’ yards.⁸ As one contemporary put it: ‘St Giles in the Fields is [both] a most wealthy and populous Parish, and . . . abounding in Pedlars, Fish-women, Newscryers and Corncutters.’⁹ It was also a community and a parish on the way down.¹⁰ St Giles was the home of the eponymous beggar in John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), and site of the ‘weekly festivals’ he purportedly attended. The author of *A Trip Through the Town* (1735), describes the parish as full of ‘Thieves, Knaves and Beggars’, and reported that ‘the Gentlemen in the Commission of the Peace . . . [were] worn out in determining and healing the Breaches as continually happen’. Modern scholarship confirms this assessment. Robert Shoemaker found that just two parishes, St Giles in the Fields and St Paul’s Covent Garden, suffered significantly higher prosecution rates for petty crimes than did the other parishes in urban Middlesex in the first decades of the eighteenth century.¹¹

It was a huge parish containing over 240 acres of almost exclusively urban development. In 1711, the vestry estimated that there were:

269 gentlemen, 1923 tradesmen and 807 poor housekeepers in all 2999 housekeepers and we doe believe that there are about seven persons in each house one with another, which makes in the whole about one & twenty thousand inhabitants whereof a considerable number are ffrench protestants who resort to the ffrench Churches and doe not speak or understand the English language. And that wee have no waste or void ground proper for building¹²

It was both crowded and geographically (as well as socially) divided, with:

the Gentry and rich inhabitants . . . principally if not altogether in Lincoln’s Inn Fields and Bloomsbury Square and the streets adjacent, and the far greater number of the

poor dwell[ing] in the streets and Allyes contiguous to the present Church and in and near Drury Lane.¹³

By the second decade of the eighteenth century, the church was also dilapidated and plagued with the bodies of the dead. In the opinion of the vestry, it was ‘very Old and Ruinous’, with the:

Body of the church l[yin]g . . . Lower than the Street by eight Foot, at least, and thereby (and by the great Number of Burials within it) is become very damp and Unwholesome, as well as Inconvenient to the Gentry . . .¹⁴

While the surrounding churchyard:

is not sufficient to containe in proper manner the number of coffins & dead corpse[s], w[hi]ch are there buried and . . . the parish are obliged to suffer the grave diggers to take up & remove the dead bodies before they are whol[l]y consumed & re bury within a very few inches of the surface, To the great annoyance of the inhabitants.¹⁵

But it was also a parish that appears to have continued to work—if only fractionally. Through the 1710s and early 1720s, the parish supported over 800 poor parishioners, at a cost paid primarily by a relatively small number of substantial householders.¹⁶ In 1710, it raised a special additional rate of 3 pence in the pound, in response to real need: ‘that the poor [being] . . . so very numerous and necessitous by reason of sickness and otherwise that the present rate . . . is not sufficient’.¹⁷ It was also one of the primary foci of the reformation of manners campaigns that struggled to control ‘vice’ in these decades. In the words of one commentator, in the area around Drury Lane on the western edge of St Giles, ‘the Societies . . . have taken more pains, and expended as large sums to reclaim this new Sodom [than . . .] would have . . . conquered the Spanish West Indies.’¹⁸

THE COMMISSION FOR BUILDING FIFTY NEW CHURCHES

The state of the parish was a scandal of national significance, and there was a national solution to hand. But it was a solution that would divide the parish even further, transform local politics, and lay the foundation for the crisis represented by *The Workhouse Cruelty*. In 1710, with the passage of the New Churches in London and Westminster Act, a programme of building was set in train that sought to cater for London’s ever-growing population, and to repair its failing religious infrastructure. It was hoped that the new churches would both encourage a religious ‘reformation of manners’ and form the basis for an equally significant reformation of local government. High on the list of priorities of the Commission created to put the Act in to effect was St Giles in the Fields. And following an initial survey of the population, it was decided that it should be divided into five new parishes.¹⁹

The work of the Commission for Building Fifty New Churches is now primarily remembered for its architectural legacy—the seventeen baroque churches designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, James Gibbs, John James, and others, and built by the

Commission.²⁰ But its interventions also substantially reshaped the social, cultural, and political geography of London. In relation to St Giles in the Fields, the Commission effectively gerrymandered poverty and wealth into separate communities, changed forever the treatment of the dead, and contributed to the creation of a more activist form of local, justice-led governance in which magistrates took a more direct role in the running of select vestries. In the process the Commission undermined many of the assumptions and relationships that made St Giles in the Fields governable.

The original plan to divide St Giles into five separate jurisdictions was eventually abandoned, first in favour of creating two separate additional parishes, one centred on Lincoln's Inn Fields and the other in Bloomsbury, and finally in favour of creating just a single new church and parish: St George Bloomsbury.²¹ And over the opposition of the Commission itself, and following a contested petition to Parliament in 1717, it also undertook the rebuilding of the church at St Giles in the Fields and to pay for the rebuilding from the proceeds of the tax on coal imported into London that underpinned the whole venture.

The most immediate impact of creating St George Bloomsbury from St Giles was to divide the parish between its poor western section—running south to north from Seven Dials, up to Tottenham Court Road—from its wealthy eastern sections including Lincoln's Inn Fields, Red Lion Square, and Bloomsbury Square. The social bifurcation involved was so extreme that the parishes were forced to run a joint system of parish poor relief throughout the eighteenth century simply to avoid the collapse of St Giles from the burden of relieving its own pauper community.

The division of the parish also brought with it disruption of a more corporeal kind. Intramural burials, inside the fabric of the church, were explicitly forbidden in the new parishes created by Act for Fifty New Churches. Faced with too many bodies and too little land, the Commissioners were forced to create separate cemeteries to accommodate the dead.²² A parish like St Giles generated between 1,200 and 1,800 bodies a year, around 300 of which derived from the part of the parish that would become St George Bloomsbury.²³ The site on Hart Street, opposite Bloomsbury Market, chosen for the new church was closely ringed by domestic housing with no room for a churchyard. As a result, in 1713 the Commissioners were obliged to purchase 16 acres of land just north of the future site of the Foundling Hospital, to be divided into three separate plots for use by different parishes. One of these was allocated to St George Bloomsbury.²⁴ The popularity in the next century of intramural burials in the church vault with the high-status parishioners, however, suggests that the new 'cemetery' never functioned effectively as part of the emotional landscape of the parish.²⁵

The position in the residual parish of St Giles was even more difficult. While the Commissioners undertook to pay for the rebuilding of the church itself, this did not include expanding the already putrid and over-full churchyard.²⁶ Over the course of the 1710s the vestry repeatedly sought to follow the Commissioners' example and purchase cheap land outside the parish, but were informed that they would need a separate Act of Parliament in order to pursue this path. In 1718 the vestry

The Body in the Workhouse

159

ordered that just as soon as the Commission had approved the new church in Bloomsbury:

this vestry will purchase a scite [*sic*] for another churchyard within the said parish and cause proper application to be made to the Bishop of London or Doctors commons . . . to enable them to proceed therein.²⁷

But they did nothing substantial until the winter of 1722, when a scandal finally forced their hand.

In the early eighteenth century the Royal College of Physicians and Company of Barber Surgeons were together allowed ten bodies a year from the strange fruit of Tyburn tree.²⁸ But this came nowhere near meeting the demand, and even this small number was frequently diminished through the concerted actions of the friends of the dead. One of the first ‘riots against the surgeons’ at Tyburn over use of the criminal corpse for dissection took place in late June 1715, and similar riots were regularly reported in the newspapers from this date onwards.²⁹ The limited availability of corpses, and the high cost of securing the bodies of executed criminals resulted in a widespread illegal trade in bodies from other sources, most frequently parish churchyards.³⁰ On Wednesday 6 February 1722/3, a ‘prodigious mob’ gathered at the churchyard at St Giles, ‘anxiously enquiring if their deceased Relations were still in their Graves’. The night before, the gravedigger, Samuel Buxton, was caught ‘in a Vile and inhumane Practise of taking up dead Bodies from the Graves and selling them to Practitioners in Anatomy’. Captured with a special basket—the head and neck of a goose artfully sewn to a corner—Buxton was found ‘with the Body of a Female Child . . . that had been newly bury’d in the Poor’s Ground’.³¹ Buxton was immediately dismissed as gravedigger and prosecuted at the expense of the parish. The vestry also advertised a £10 reward for further information.³² In the end no one came forward and Buxton was convicted of the relatively minor crime of ‘trespass & misdemeanour’, fined 6s 8d, and sentenced on 26 February to three months’ hard labour.³³

Within a week of Buxton’s conviction, on 5 March, the vestry resolved ‘to view & take a plane of the piece of ground called the Vinegar Yard in this parish . . . for a Burying Ground, Hospital & Workhouse’.³⁴ About 150 meters from the Church, and hidden deep in the back streets south of High Holborn, Vinegar Yard was already associated with poverty and disorder. Around this date it figures several times in the *Old Bailey Proceedings* as home to pawnshops and gin dealers. In *The Beggar’s Opera*, written and first performed in 1728, Macheath sends to Vinegar Yard, along with Hockley in the Hole and Lewkner’s Lane, to secure the attendance of eight ‘wanton hussies’ to help him while away an afternoon of song and drink.³⁵ From 1723 Vinegar Yard also became St Giles’ answer to both burying the dead and warehousing the poor. The Commissioners, in combination with the theft of dead bodies, had directly set in train a significant reconfiguration of the geography of life and death in the parish. Dying in the workhouse meant that Mary Whistle also died in Vinegar Yard, and was probably buried there.

The Commissioners also made a substantial impact on the nature of parish governance in London, bringing in its train the creation of a new workhouse. The

original Act of Parliament ordered the Commission to ensure that each new parish they created was governed by a 'select vestry' composed of 'a convenient number of sufficient inhabitants . . . to be vestrymen', and were charged to act 'as the Vestrymen of the Parish of St. Martin in the Fields . . . now Have or Exercise'.³⁶ St Giles had long had a select vestry in which a small body of wealthy householders recruited new members and ran the parish as they saw fit.³⁷ But by regularizing this form of oligarchical government, the Commission set London local politics on fire. Always the master of a punchy title, Daniel Defoe's 1719 pamphlet *Parochial Tyranny: Or, Select Vestries Become the Plague of the People* addressed the issue head on, and located the problem in the government of parishes like St Giles in the Fields.³⁸

Opposition to the select vestries in London had a long history.³⁹ But those created by the Commissioners form an important starting point for a new kind of popular politics in London that would eventually give rise to 'Radical Westminster'. The extensive role of lesser householders in parochial government both in Westminster and beyond formed an all-important breeding ground for democratic ideas.⁴⁰ In St Giles, the debates around parish governance helped to embed a new sort of activist government by a small group of reforming Justices. Although St Giles had long included JPs among its select vestrymen, the 1710s and 1720s witnessed the rise of a newly active generation of active magistrates. Chief among these was John Milner, who effectively led the vestry from 1715 onwards while simultaneously serving as an active JP. Milner was chair of the Middlesex Bench in both 1722 and 1727.⁴¹

It was Milner who first advocated the establishment of a workhouse in the parish, who personally oversaw its creation, and to whom *The Cruelty* would explicitly appeal for redress. An early advocate of the Reformation of Manners, the campaign to enforce laws against blasphemy, lewdness, and drunkenness, Milner became disenchanted in the 1720s following what appears to have been a judicial turf war. He was instrumental in having two 'reforming' constables, Phillip Cholmondley and Edward Vaughan, excluded from St Giles.⁴² In a further deterioration of his relationship with the Societies, he also fell out with John Gonson, the most high-profile of the Reformation of Manners JPs. Gonson was accused of manipulating the press to insert a specific mention of his role in delivering an address of congratulations on the accession of George II, when this honour should have been Milner's alone.⁴³ In part as an alternative to the Reformation of Manners, Milner led the 1725 investigation into gin drinking in urban Middlesex that resulted in a series of Gin Acts passed from 1729 onwards, seeking to limit gin drinking.

By embedding a new kind of justice-led local government in the vestries of the new parishes, the Commissioners ensured that figures like Milner, who could tie the parish and the bench together, would become more common and would, in the words of Daniel Defoe, use their new authority to 'ingross the Government of the Out-Parishes', 'to make the poor their Property', and to 'bubble the parish' by the creation of new workhouses.⁴⁴ Milner could easily have formed the model for Defoe's 'Justice Troublesome' from the title of *Parochial Tyranny*. Indeed, Defoe's broader publishing campaign of the 1720s to reform local government and social

policy exemplifies the deeply ambiguous character of ‘improvement’ in this period, and the largely inchoate but passionate opposition it generated. Like many contemporaries, Defoe tended to see the behaviour of the populace as a social problem, but blamed civic leaders for their failure to implement a solution.⁴⁵

The Commission for Building Fifty New Churches impacted on the workings of the local community in one final way—it tore down churches, and only very slowly built new ones. The building work at St George Bloomsbury took over fifteen years, with the new church only finally opening in 1731. At St Giles the rebuilding work took only four years (1731–4), but was hugely inconvenient.⁴⁶ The local French church was rented as a ‘Tabernacle’ for the duration, but could accommodate only a fraction of parishioners, and parish employees had to be financially compensated for the resulting disruption.⁴⁷

In the summer of 1731, as Mary Whistle lay dying, the geography of the parish must have seemed to have lost its solidity. Many of the touchstones of community—the church and churchyard, secure parish boundaries, and the clear relationship between the poor and the rich as fellow parishioners—were either gone or changed beyond recognition. The parish boundaries, beaten every year from time immemorial—and physically beaten into the memory of generations of charity school children—had moved.⁴⁸ When the dead could find no rest, when the rhythms of the ritual year had no home, and when the very people to whom you paid deference seemed all too eager to draw a secure line between you and them, outrage at the treatment of a single woman in the workhouse was more likely to find a sympathetic hearing.

THE WORKHOUSE IN VINEGAR YARD

The Commission’s work undermined the traditions of parish life that held the politics of the parish pump in check. But it also let loose a Prometheus of innovation—under the banner of improvement. By encouraging the creation of an increasingly activist vestry—led by Justices like Milner—it helped make possible the creation of a new parish workhouse that would change the nature of social relations, and provide the direct justification for the *Workhouse Cruelty* campaign.

In the dozen years following the establishment of London’s first parish workhouse in Enfield in 1719, at least 38 institutions were created, able to accommodate at least 5,000 women, children, and men. In 1730 there were five houses in Westminster and over twenty in Middlesex. The City of London had at least a further thirteen.⁴⁹ Many were simple parish houses where high-dependency paupers could be housed and cared for by the parish nurse.⁵⁰ But others, like that at St Giles in the Fields, were substantial institutions organized as highly bureaucratic systems. Advocated by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and authorized by a permissive Act of Parliament in 1723—the Workhouse Test Act—parish workhouses were seen as a means of bending the poor to their religious duty of social subservience, enforcing a powerful work discipline, and

as a disincentive that would discourage the workshy.⁵¹ If a ‘workhouse test’ was imposed, paupers could be denied relief if they refused to enter the house.

With John Milner in the lead, in 1723 St Giles ‘Resolved . . . (nomine Contradicente) that . . . Vinegar Yard and the houses thereon . . . are very proper & convenient for a churchyard, hospital & workhouse’.⁵² A subscription among the gentlemen of the parish was set up to help defray the costs. Much of the discussion in vestry was concerned with the layout and regulation of the new burial ground; but it is clear that the parish was initially seeking to create a relatively benign mixed institution, with the ground floor given over to a ‘workhouse’—possibly a non-residential work room—and the floor above this dedicated to a substantial hospital in which the activities of the parish nurses could be centralized.⁵³

This initial plan, however, did not survive the year, and instead of a parish hospital and workroom open to the approximately 840 paupers on the parish books that year, the whole of the establishment was handed over to the most active workhouse contractor in the country—Matthew Marryott—and turned into a residential workhouse able to accommodate around 350 people.⁵⁴

The SPCK actively promoted Marryott’s work through the publication of *An Account of Several Workhouses*, and in 1726 Marryott claimed direct management of some thirty houses, and to have been instrumental in the creation of 150 more.⁵⁵ When St Giles accepted Marryott’s proposals in late April 1724, the workhouse in Vinegar Yard became the centre of his growing pauper empire, and a key proving ground for the ‘workhouse test’ system he imposed on other parishes and promoted nationwide.⁵⁶

The creation of this new-style workhouse was a significant step for a parish in the midst of being torn apart by the Commission for Building Fifty New Churches. In retrospect, looking back over ten years of workhouse development, Daniel Defoe once again captured the popular perception of what had occurred:

To make a Shew of Frugality and soothe the Parishioners, they have lately set up Work-houses in many parishes and raised large Contributions for those Purposes (out of which no Doubt they have had some Share) . . . and the Parishioners have only the Mortification to see themselves gull’d and Vestry ridden *in Eternum*.⁵⁷

The select vestry at St Giles did not, however, have it all its own way. They were clearly sensitive to accusations of mismanagement, and of maltreatment of the poor. Two years after the workhouse opened, the vestry agreed a detailed set of regulations and rules that were later published in pamphlet form. As a result, we know a large amount about the poor of the parish, and the ideal conditions aspired to. We also know a great deal about issues the vestry were concerned to nip in the bud.

By December 1729 the workhouse had a population of 297 inmates in twenty-three separate and specialized wards, served by seventeen nurses drawn from among the inmates and given responsibility for managing one or more of the wards.⁵⁸ We know the books Marryott lent to the inmates, including twenty-five copies of *The Conditions of Salvation* and a dozen copies each of the SPCK’s short diatribes *Against Drunkenness* and *Against Uncleaness*, and we know the number of psalters, testaments, primers, horn books, and spelling books required by John Scrimshaw to

The Body in the Workhouse

163

teach a gaggle of workhouse children to read and write. We know the diet and the clothing provided, the number of beds, and how they were distributed through the wards. We know the quality of the sheeting provided, and who had to share, and who had a bed to themselves. We know the age and condition of each person in each ward, and the name of the nurse responsible for their care. We know that some wards were reserved for the elderly, some for mothers and babies, some for the ill, insane, and disabled, and others for girls and boys. We know the inmates were supposed to be employed in carding wool, and we know when people were supposed to get up, and how much time they were allowed for cleaning their teeth and combing their hair.

But the rules also reveal the gnawing anxieties felt by the vestry, and an active concern that the wider community of parish householders would judge the workhouse as cruel, socially iniquitous, or corrupt. Many of the rules were given up to systems of inspection and complaint:

That a book be always kept and lie open with pen and ink ready in the vestry room, for any of the vestry or others who come to view the workhouse to enter their observations, opinions or proposals therein, to be examined and considered at the next meeting of the vestry there.

And the final rule in the general set:

If any gentleman or other inhabitants of this parish disapprove of any of these regulations, or have any others to propose, they are desired to send them in writing to the workhouse . . . in order to be laid before the vestry at their next meeting there, where due regard shall be had to them, and such as shall be approved of, shall be added to these already agreed upon.

The rules conclude with a final remarkable sentence that seems to belie Edward Thompson's conclusions on the roles of anonymous letters in this period: 'And they may set their names, or send letters without any names, as they think most proper.'⁵⁹

The rules also make clear that the vestry were aware that they were transgressing significant social boundaries by forcing all the poor into a single general institution. The published rules:

Recommended to the Governor to distinguish those, who have been Ancient House-keepers and lived well, and are reduced by Misfortunes, from the other Poor, who are become so by Vice or Idleness, . . . with respect to their Lodging, Cloathing, Diet or otherwise, as he shall think fit.⁶⁰

And finally, perhaps reflecting the anger over the theft of bodies by the gravedigger a few years earlier, there was also an explicit concern over the treatment of the dead:

That, when any person dies in the house, the nurse attending that ward shall immediately go for a coffin and shroud, and the Dead person be washed and laid in the coffin; and then the nurse with proper assistance, shall forthwith bring the corpse down to the room appointed for that purpose . . .

That the nurses at the death of any person in their respective wards shall deliver up to the matron all the cloaths, money and goods belonging to such person . . .

That the cloaths of persons dying in the house be brought into the store room . . . ⁶¹

And so on for some three pages. The burying yard was similarly a focus of anxiety: 'By which means the poor do often get out of the house, and strangers crowd into it, which creates several disorders and irregularities.'⁶²

THE CRUELTY

The Workhouse Cruelty ballad and broadside needs to be read both against the destruction wrought by the Commission for Building Fifty New Churches on the fabric of parish life and against the pressure placed on social relations by the innovations and 'improvements' associated with the creation of a new-style workhouse. The story the ballad and broadside chose to tell reflected the perception of these changes by the parish poor and petty householders.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of *The Workhouse Cruelty* was that the authors of the ballad and broadside chose to focus on Mary Whistle at all. We do not know a great deal about her (even her first name is uncertain, being given as either Mary or Margaret in different sources), but according to a Justice-led enquiry held a few weeks after her death, she was 'well in Health, and not above 45 Years Old', and while she was subject to epileptic fits, and did refuse 'to card, or do any other Kind of Work', a large part of the reason for her confinement in the 'dark hole' was her 'beating a poor Natural then in the Workhouse'—one of the three inmates labelled 'idiot' in the register, or perhaps William Richardson—a lunatic, 'called the king'.⁶³ The master and mistress (Marryott and Underwood) had no authority to inflict corporal punishment on inmates, and the enquiry determined that Whistle 'was never beat, abused, or in any wise cruelly or severely used', and that the 'dark hole' was a clean and dry place with a good bed and ventilation, of a sort normally used to confine the mentally ill. Any problem with smells and odours was put down to Mary's poor personal hygiene.⁶⁴ The truth of the enquiry's findings are open to doubt, but they do imply that Whistle was perhaps not the most sympathetic subject to choose as the basis for outraged campaigning.

If Mary's treatment was within acceptable limits (at least in the view of Milner and his fellow magistrates), the question becomes what it was about her case, and the others cited, that so fundamentally exercised the authors of the campaign.

In part the answer lies in the heightened concern for the body of the poor generated by the recent history of the parish. The broadside's major and repetitious claim was that pauper bodies were being 'anatomized' or dissected, including:

several . . . who died in the same manner [as Mary Whistle], and have been anatomized, particularly a woman found dead by Nurse Tabb, who saw her bones broken . . . because she could not be put in to the coffin by reason of her crookedness . . .

The Body in the Workhouse

165

And:

One Sarah Jones who once kept a good house in the Parish . . . [was] ordered into the Dark Hold where she lay upwards of three weeks, and then died . . . Her head was soft as pap, and one of her ears stript off.

And:

About the same time a woman died there in child-bed and her fingers were cut off, her eyes pulled out of her head, and the hallows stuffed with sawdust.

And:

About that time nurse R[i]d[in]g understanding that a child was to have been made an anatomy of, after their common custom (for many are carried in sacks by night) Nurse R[i]d[in]g . . . said she'd acquaint Justice Milner with it, upon which she was sent for by M[arryo]th, who kicked her for it, and ordered the doors to be shut, and threatened her with the hold, but finding she had friends M[arryo]th gave her a crown to hold her tongue

In a similar vein, the broadside places great emphasis on the condition of Mary's body:

Half starved, eat up with vermin . . .
Holes in her legs her arms her hips and thighs.⁶⁵

The workhouse overlooked the mass burial 'Holes or Pits (called the Poor's Holes)', that pocked the cemetery and which needed to accommodate at least two or three new bodies each day.⁶⁶

Although there is little evidence that Mary Whistle's body was desecrated, it was a dead body; and against the local backdrop of the disruption caused by the Commission, the collective memory of body-snatching going back to at least 1723, and the sheer physical proximity of endless corpses, claims about her physical condition and fate become more intelligible. It was also good politics.

In the few years before the publication of the *Cruelty*, the vestry had been forced to respond repeatedly to claims of desecration. In the autumn of 1729, the vestry recorded:

That Mr Bull the apothecary at the workhouse had caused the arm & breast bone of a poor woman who dyed there to be cut off & carried away to a person who finishes skeletons, which being discovered had created great noise & disturbance.

Which led in turn to a resolution both for the immediate dismissal of the apothecary, and that in future:

if any person shall discover any other person who shall be guilty of such offence so that such person may be convicted thereof he or she so discovering shall receive from the upper churchwarden of the said parish . . . the sume of forty shillings.

Leading directly to the further resolution reversing the policy of centralizing medical care in the now scandal ridden workhouse: 'That for the future the apothecary belonging to the workhouse do attend such out-patients belonging to

this parish as the upper churchwarden . . . shall direct.⁶⁷ The reality of the desecration of the bodies of the poor and subsequent complaints had forced the vestry to effectively abandon the policy of imposing a strict ‘workhouse test’ for at least the sick poor.

Within a very few years, as Kevin Siena has illustrated, many of the more substantial London workhouses had come to focus their efforts increasingly on the provision of medical care for the infirm and elderly, at the expense of any attempt to impose a labour discipline. In neighbouring parishes Marryott was pushed from one workhouse after another, and in each instance the parish involved then turned its back on a strict ‘workhouse test’ in favour of more comprehensive medical care.⁶⁸

St George Hanover Square dispensed with Marryott’s services in 1727, and within months was constructing a new infirmary. Marryott’s departure from St Margaret’s Westminster’s workhouse was rapidly followed by the conversion of six rooms into ‘a ward . . . particularly assigned for the reception of the sick’.⁶⁹ A further sick ward was added in the following year. At St Leonard Shoreditch, Marryott’s dismissal signalled a comprehensive (and expensive) rebuilding of the whole house.⁷⁰

St Giles’s decision to support medical care for the wider population forms both a moment of transition in parish policy and a moment when a particular popular strategy on the part of the poor and of workhouse inmates successfully resulted in a measurable improvement in parish provision. The *Cruelty*, in other words, was pursuing a tactic which had born fruit in the past.

The *Cruelty*’s emphasis on the body was distinctive, but it also took great pains to emphasize issues of social differentiation amongst the poor. In this instance, the *Cruelty* chimed powerfully with a wider public attack on workhouses, appearing to echo Daniel Defoe’s 1727 complaint that workhouses:

mix the Good and Bad; and too often make Reprobates of all alike . . . if an honest Gentlemen or Trader should leave a Wife or Children unprovided for, what a shocking thing it is to think they must be mixed with Vagrants, Beggars, Thieves, Night walkers? To receive their Insults, to hear their Blasphemous and Obscene Discourse, to be suffocated with the Nastiness, and eat up with their Vermin.⁷¹

Throughout the ballad and broadside there is a continuous and anxious emphasis on the status of householders.

Here we’ll suppose a poor housekeeper, he shall be obliged to pay to the poor, secondly he shall pay overates two or three in a year: thirdly, after this he shall pay towards the building of a workhouse; fourthly, thro’ long mischance he shall fall to decay, and be brought to so low an ebb of fortune as to be obliged to ask relief; fifthly, instead of any comfortable relief he shall be then put into a workhouse, with little or no difference made between the whore, the thief, the pickpocket, the chimney sweeper, the japaner, the link boy and this, poor honest housekeeper.⁷²

The respectability of a distinct subset of the poor was repeatedly emphasized—their distance from chimney sweeps and japanners. Sarah Jones ‘once kept a good house

The Body in the Workhouse

167

in the parish of St Giles in the Fields'; while another was robbed by Marryott himself of 'her money, upwards of three pounds, and good cloaths, all which they took from her'. And Mary Whistle herself, 'having been a good sufficient house-keeper did refuse to work, as being unaccustomed to it'.

As the ballad lamented:

Oh! What a dismal thing it is to tell,
When persons in their younger days live so well
Paying all taxes and to church and poor
They are respected while they've wealth in store.
But if by sad misfortune ever they,
Should happen to fall into decay,
Small is their comfort, great will be their grief.
Since with such cruelty they give relief.

In other words, the horror of the workhouse to the mind of the authors, lay in its undifferentiated use as a provision for both the undeserving poor and decayed householders, implying a moral equivalence between the two.

Ironically, the workhouse at St Giles went to great pains to differentiate different groups of paupers, with the different wards reserved for specific categories of the poor. It is not clear exactly which ward was reserved for ex-householders and which held the chimney sweeps and japanners; but wards 37 and 39, under the care of Nurses Rachel Rotteny and Ann Barker, accommodated seven and nine women respectively, including the 'schoolmistress'. Together they contained seventeen beds between sixteen inmates. And ward 40, with eight adult men, had nine beds, and a full-time nurse, Elizabeth Avona. In contrast, ward 41, under the care of the quite elderly Nurse Hester Didgeon, appears to have been reserved for less 'deserving' paupers, accommodating sixteen women between the ages of 12 and 80 in just ten beds. Because St Giles's workhouse had been created from an existing building, it was necessarily divided into a large number of individual rooms or wards; and it is apparent from the ages and conditions of the people in each ward recorded in the registers that a strict division was maintained by age, health, and (almost certainly) social status.⁷³ Unfortunately the registers do not survive for the period during which Mary Whistle was an inmate.

The *Cruelty's* observation of this 'boundary transgressed' reflects the micro-politics of St Giles in the Fields, riven in two by the creation of St George Bloomsbury. That the workhouse in Vinegar Yard served both parishes probably exacerbated the situation. Householders with a settlement in the newly exclusive parish of St George Bloomsbury perhaps resented being forced to share accommodation (if not beds) with those from the now slum-like neighbourhood of St Giles.

Unlike the appeal to the sanctity of the pauper body, it is not clear that this strategy and emphasis on social exclusion impacted upon parish policy. But it certainly chimed perfectly with Daniel Defoe's appeal:

If we must have Work-houses, let there at least be separate Wards, and Tables; let some Differences be made between once substantial and contributing House-keepers, and vagabond Wretches.⁷⁴

The Justice-led enquiry into the *Cruelty* held in mid-September 1731 did not stop at taking witness statements from inmates and staff. The body of Mary Whistle was also subject to a careful autopsy overseen by two surgeons, two doctors, and an apothecary, and the subsequent report was published in full in the *Daily Post*. The autopsy recorded that Mary Whistle had died of natural causes:

The body . . . was in a natural full state and not in the least emaciated . . . at least two inches of fat, the contents of the belly in a very good state, the breast in a healthy condition likewise.⁷⁵

According to medical opinion, the cause of death was ‘little watery tumours’ on the brain.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of the true cause of Mary Whistle’s death, and despite the absolute anonymity of the ballad and broadside’s authors, *The Workhouse Cruelty* actually achieved a great deal. Most importantly, it forced the parish to dismiss Matthew Marryott. He would never run another workhouse, and he was dead within six months. And with his passing went the full-blooded aspiration to impose a strict workhouse test.

The workhouse at St Giles (along with most others in London) increasingly focused on medical care for the poor, including those still living in their own homes, constantly reconfiguring its provision to cater more fully for the needs of the wider community. By 1797, the overseers promoted the workhouse as ‘an Asylum for the aged, for orphans in an infant state, for idiots and the lame, blind, sick, or otherwise infirm and diseased’.⁷⁶ There is no evidence that the house was reordered to further emphasize subtle social distinctions between different groups of the poor; but over the course of the century parish relief itself increasingly became the reserve of a residuum of poverty, with more ‘deserving’ paupers catered for by an ever-growing series of associational charities.

The *Cruelty* highlights the powerful mental anguish that comes with change forced on individuals possessed of little authority, highlighting a specific type of suffering, and mirroring an equally specific form of happiness. Mary Whistle’s suffering focused on her loss of place in the community, her loss of status and sense of belonging. Her confinement was largely tangential to her mistreatment. And while her wounds were cited as evidenced of her suffering, little emphasis was placed on the associated physical pain. Neither was her suffering a simple reflection of her material deprivation. As a dependent parishioner Mary would have had to surrender her meagre possessions on entering the workhouse. Cherished mementos and keepsakes were incompatible with workhouse life. Instead, Mary’s suffering lay in her repudiation by the parish, and in the imposition of a new ‘improved’ system of social relations, made material in the bricks and mortar of a workhouse. By extension, her happiness—long time passing—had comprised a secure place in a caring community.⁷⁷ The *Cruelty*’s ability to mobilize outrage and change rested on

its appeal to a lost ‘felicity’—an older style of happiness that lay in the possession of a secure position in a well-ordered social world, marked by the respectful treatment of both respectable householders and their mortal remains. The real crime committed on Mary Whistle and her fellow paupers—the fount of their suffering, and negation of their happiness—lay in the parish’s decision to improve them out of their place in the world.

The *Cruelty* represents no more than a minor victory in the ongoing battle for resources and control waged between the middling sort and the poor. Tied to other contemporary scandals and disputes, it could be seen as a single skirmish in a larger war over the control of the parishes of London, and with them the meat and gristle of domestic social governance. The *Cruelty* fits neatly alongside the 1729 scandal, and subsequent parliamentary enquiry, into the treatment of debtors at the Marshalsea (which the broadside explicitly references), and the 1732 revolution in St Botolph without Aldersgate, where a ‘select’ vestry was overthrown in favour of a more open and ‘general’ vestry.⁷⁸ It also resonates with the concerns that ensured both the decline of the Reformation of Manners movement and the rise of both the parochial Watch Acts of the 1730s and 1740s and the disastrous gin campaign of the same decades.⁷⁹

But most importantly, the *Cruelty* represents a moment when even paupers and workhouse inmates could influence the development of policy by exposing the uncomfortable moral ambiguity that accompanied reform and improvement. And while the campaign was in part a simple response to the unique circumstances of St Giles in the Fields—a response to the disruption caused by the Commission for Building Fifty New Churches—the *Cruelty* was also an early foray into the kind of popular, print-based politics that would increasingly come to characterize the troublesome parishes of the metropolis and beyond.

NOTES

1. The words and suggested music do not appear to work together easily, suggesting the ballad was ‘chanted’ rather than sung, or else was never intended to be ‘performed’ at all.
2. The copies of the ballad and broadside held by the British Library appear to be unique survivals. *The Workhouse Cruelty; Being a Full and True Account of One Mrs. M. W., . . . in the Parish of St. Giles’s in the Fields* ([1731]) ESTC: T12587; and *The Workhouse Cruelty: Workhouses Turn’d Goals; and Goalers [sic] Executioners . . . in the Parish of St. Giles’s in the Fields* ([1731]) ESTC: T12585. Of course, access to even this most basic form of print culture suggests that the authors of *The Workhouse Cruelty* were not entirely destitute.
3. 9 Geo. I, c. 7, ‘An Act for Amending the Laws Relating to the Settlement, Employment and Relief of the Poor’.
4. *The Daily Post*, 18 Sept. 1731.
5. Tim Hitchcock, ‘Marryott, Matthew (bap. 1670, d. 1731/2)’, *ODNB*.
6. For a fuller account of this evolution of parish government, see Tim Hitchcock and Robert Shoemaker, *London Lives: Crime, Poverty and the Making of a Modern City* (Cambridge, 2015), 107–21. For a broad overview of the body, the churchyard, and burial, see Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal*

- Remains* (New Haven, Conn., 2015). For London churchyards, see Vanessa Harding, *The Dead and the Living in Paris and London, 1500–1670* (Cambridge, 2002), 48–68; and for the parish as a community and notions of entitlement, see K. D. M. Snell, *Parish and Belonging: Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales, 1700–1950* (Cambridge, 2006), ch. 3.
7. See esp. Paul Slack, *From Reformation to Improvement: Public Welfare in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999); *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2014).
 8. See Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, *The London Encyclopedia* (London, 1983), ‘St Giles-in-the-Fields’, ‘Drury Lane’, ‘Seven Dials’. See also John T. Smith, *A Book for a Rainy Day* (London, 1845, 1905 edn), 36. For the early existence of a ‘Rag-fair’ at Seven Dials, see LMA, MJ/SP/With 1713 (Temp Anne’), no. 1, cited by Robert Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment: Petty Crime and the Law in London and Rural Middlesex, c.1660–1725* (Cambridge, 1991), 294.
 9. *A View of London and Westminster: or, the Town Spy etc., By a German Gentleman* (London, 1725), 12.
 10. See Shoemaker, *Prosecution and Punishment*, 293–4.
 11. Ibid. table 10.3, ‘Socioeconomic Characteristics and Prosecution Rates of Urban Parishes’, 291; see also Peter Linebaugh, ‘Tyburn: A Study of Crime and the Labouring Poor in London during the First Half of the Eighteenth Century’ (Ph.D, University of Warwick, 1975), 60, ‘Graph X: The Number of Indictments (absolute and relative to the population) in Some London Parishes in 1740’; 117, ‘Table II: Monthly Number of Indictments in Three London Parishes in 1740’; 119–20.
 12. Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre [CLSAC], St Giles in the Fields, ‘Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771’, P/GF//M/2, fo. 470r, 18 Oct. 1711.
 13. Ibid. fo. 470v, 18 Oct. 1711.
 14. *Reasons, Humbly Offered for a Bill to Rebuild the Parish-Church of St. Giles’s in the Fields, at the Pulick Charge* (London, 1717?), n.p.
 15. CLSAC, ‘Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771’, fo. 505v, 16 Apr. 1723.
 16. In 1724 the parish raised some £5,404, of which almost £3,000 was spent on the poor. See William Maitland, *The History of London from its Foundation by the Romans, to the Present Time* (London, 1739), 757.
 17. CLSAC, ‘Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771’, fo. 467v, 26 Oct. 1710.
 18. *A View of London and Westminster*, 13–14.
 19. M. H. Port (ed.), *The Commissions for Building Fifty New Churches: The Minute Books, 1711–1727, A Calendar* (London, London Record Society, vol. 23, 1986), item 6. NB The four parishes named against St Giles do not include the residual parish.
 20. Port, *Commissions*, xl.
 21. In a classic example of nimbyism, the wealthy inhabitants of Lincoln’s Inn Fields scotched the proposed church despite promises that ‘there be no churchyard, nor burials in the church, nor a ring of bells’, to disturb their elegant lives. Ibid. item 7.
 22. ‘No Burial shall, at any Time hereafter, be in or under any of the Churches by this Act intended to be erected’, 10 Anne, c. 11, xxxi. Only three vestries obeyed the commissioners—St George Hanover Square, St George Bloomsbury, and St John Smith Square. Malcom Johnson, *Crypts of London* (London, 2013), 14. The issue of intramural burial was also part of a more complex theological/political dispute. See Mark Jenner, ‘Death, Decomposition and Dechristianisation? Public Health and Church Burial in Eighteenth-Century England’, *English Historical Review* 120, 487 (2005), 615–32.

The Body in the Workhouse

171

23. Between 1710 and 1730, the lowest number of burials was 1,205 and the highest was 1,789, in 1711 and 1718 respectively. *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 1657 to 1758 Inclusive. Together with several other bills of an earlier date* (London, 1759), returns for 1710 to 1730. Significantly, *The Case of the New Parish in Bloomsbury* (London, 1716), 1, substantially understates the problem, putting the figure at between 850 and 900 burials per annum.
24. Rowland Dobie, *History of the United Parishes of St. Giles-in-the-Fields and St George, Bloomsbury* (London, 2nd edn, 1834), 155. In the event the new parish generated approximately 500 bodies a year. *A Collection of the Yearly Bills of Mortality, from 1657 to 1758* (London, 1759), returns for 1732–9.
25. See Ceridwen Boston, Angela Boyle, John Gill, and Annsofie Witkin, *In the Vaults Beneath: Archaeological Recording at St George's Church, Bloomsbury* (Oxford, 2009), 61–94. For the complex economy of burial in early 18th-c. London, see Jeremy Boulton, 'Traffic in Corpses and the Commodification of Burial in Georgian London', *Continuity and Change* 29(2) (2014).
26. Although burial space was at a premium throughout the capital, the use of large communal 'burial holes' for the bodies of the poor was particularly associated with the parishes of St Martin in the Fields, St James Westminster, and St Giles in the Fields. *Some Customs considere'd Whether Prejudicial to the Health of the City* (London, 1721), 8.
27. CLSAC, 'Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771', fo. 495v, 21 Feb. 1718.
28. Peter Linebaugh, 'The Tyburn Riot Against the Surgeons', in Douglas Hay et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1975), 70–1.
29. *Weekly Journal with Fresh Advices Foreign and Domestick*, 25 June 1715. On this occasion six bodies were rescued by the friends of those executed.
30. Linebaugh, 'The Tyburn Riot', 71, 74 and graph, 77.
31. *Daily Post* (London), 8 Feb. 1723. Peter Linebaugh cites several other similar thefts occurring in the same year. See 'The Tyburn Riot', 71.
32. CLSAC, 'Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771', fo. 502v, 7 Feb. 1722.
33. 'Middlesex Sessions: Sessions Papers, February 1723', London Lives, 1690–1800, LMSMPS502090060 (www.londonlives.org, version 1.1, 17 June 2012).
34. CLSAC, 'Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771', fo. 503r, 5 Mar. 1722.
35. See e.g. Old Bailey Proceedings Online (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 7.2, Mar. 2015), Dec. 1724, trial of Margaret Roberts and Sarah Alexander (t17241204-33); and Oct. 1730, trial of Thomas Rivers (t17301014-68). John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), scenes 3 and 4.
36. 10 Anne, c. 11, xx. Quoted in Sidney Webb and Beatrice Webb, *English Local Government*, vol. 1: *The Parish and the County* (London, 1906; repr. 1963), 199.
37. The select vestry was only abolished in in July 1829 following a protracted legal dispute; an event which the 19th-c. historian of the parish claimed had simply restored, 'the long-lost rights of the parishioners'. See Dobie, *History of the United Parishes*, vi.
38. Andrew Moreton [Daniel Defoe], *Parochial Tyranny: Or, Select Vestries Become the Plague of the People. With a Word by the By to Mr. Justice Troublesome* (London, 1719), 2.
39. J. F. Merritt, 'Contested Legitimacy and the Ambiguous Rise of Vestries in Early Modern London', *Historical Journal* 54 (2011), 25–45.
40. The best exploration of this evolving parochial politics is Gillian Williamson, 'The Nature of Mid-Eighteenth-Century Popular Politics in the City of Westminster: The Select Vestry Committee of 1742 and the Parish of St George Hanover Square' (MA thesis, Birkbeck College, 2008). For an older study emphasizing exclusively

- parliamentary politics, see Nicholas Rogers, 'Aristocratic Clientage, Trade and Interdependency: Popular Politics in Pre-Radical Westminster', *Past and Present* 61 (1973).
41. Approximately a third to a half of the members of the vestry were JPs in these years, including Narcissus Luttrell, Richard Dyott, John Richardson, and William Poulteney. Many of the remainder were active as frequent jurors at the Old Bailey, including Giles Riddle, Bruce Randall, and James Pinnock.
 42. Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 131.
 43. 'Middlesex Sessions: Sessions Papers, December 1717', *London Lives*, 1690–1800.
 44. Andrew Moreton [Daniel Defoe], *Parochial Tyranny* (London, 1719), 2, 3, 5. The specific discussion of workhouses in this new system was added in the 2nd edn with the title variant: *Parochial Tyranny: Or, The House-Keeper's Complaint Against the insupportable Exactions, and Partial Assessments of Select Vestries, &c.* (London, 2nd edn, 1727); 33–5. Thomas De Veil would perfect this role over the next quarter-century, being described as the 'oracle of the vestry' by his biographer. *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Sir Thomas De Veil, Knight, One of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace, for the Counties of Middlesex, Essex, Surrey and Hertfordshire, The City and Liberty of Westminster, The Tower of London, and the Liberties thereof, &c.* (London, 1748), 46.
 45. The most substantial example of Defoe's output in this vein is Andrew Moreton [Daniel Defoe], *Augusta Triumphans: or, the Way to Make London the Most Flourishing City in the Universe* (London, 1728),
 46. Port, *Commissions*, xl.
 47. CLSAC, 'Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771', fo. unreadable, 20 Apr. 1731.
 48. Weinreb and Hibbert, *The London Encyclopaedia*, 'Tottenham Court Road'.
 49. Timothy V. Hitchcock, 'The English Workhouse: A Study in Institutional Poor Relief in Selected Counties, 1696–1750' (DPhil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1985), appendix, 258–81.
 50. For an analysis of parish care that significantly undermines the clear distinction between the roles of parish nurses and early workhouses, see Jeremy Boulton, 'Welfare Systems and the Parish Nurse in Early Modern London', *Family & Community History* 10(2) (2007).
 51. Tim Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers: The SPCK and the Parochial Workhouse Movement', in Lee Davidson et al. (eds), *Stilling the Crumbling Hive: The Response to Social and Economic Problems in England. 1689–1750* (Stroud, 1992).
 52. CLSAC, 'Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771', fo. 506r, 17 May 1723.
 53. *Ibid.* fo. 509r, 30 Mar. 1724.
 54. *The Case of the Parish of St. Giles's in the Fields as to their Poor and a Work-House Designed to be Built for Employing Them* (London, 1722?), 2.
 55. *A Representation of Some Mismanagements by Parish-Officers in the Method at Present Followed for Maintaining the Poor* (London, 1726). A note on the title page of the edition held by the British Library ascribes authorship to: 'John Marriott Governor of the St Giles Workhouse'. See also Hitchcock, 'Paupers and Preachers'.
 56. CLSAC, 'Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771', fo. 511r, 23 Apr. 1724.
 57. *Parochial Tyranny* (2nd edn, 1727), 33.
 58. The large number of wards is unusual and reflects the complex layout of the workhouse building, with some wards containing only two or three beds. The term 'nurse' in this context is also ambiguous, and includes both women with substantial medical responsibilities for three separate infirmary wards and others whose care was focused on exclusively healthy adults. LMA, St Giles Workhouse Admissions and Discharge Register 1727–1729, X020/055, n.p.

The Body in the Workhouse

173

59. *Rules and Orders, To be Observed by the Officers and Servants in St. Giles's Workhouse and by the Poor therein* (1726), 19, 22. Edward Thompson, 'The Crime of Anonymity' in Hay et al., *Albion's Fatal Tree*, 255–308.
60. *Rules and Orders*, 17.
61. *Ibid.* 9–11.
62. *Regulations which were Agreed upon and Established the Twelfth Day of July 1727 By the Gentlemen of the Vestry then present, For the better Government and Management of the Work-House* (Dublin, 1727), 6–7. This is a revised version of the *Rules and Orders* published for the 'Consideration of the House of Commons of Ireland'.
63. See e.g. LMA, St Giles Workhouse Admissions and Discharge Register 1727–1729, X020/055, n.p., 30 Dec. 1729. *The Daily Post* (London), 18 Sept. 1731.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Workhouse Cruelty: Workhouses Turn'd Goals*.
66. *Some Customs considere'd* (1721), 8. For the best account of pauper burials in 18th-c. London, see Jeremy Boulton, 'Exclusion, Deviance or Choice? Pauper Burial in Westminster, 1725–1834', Social History Society Annual Conference, University of Northumbria, 8 April 2014. (<http://research.ncl.ac.uk/pauperlives/documents/SocialHistoryConferenceNorthumbriaApril8th2014.pdf>, consulted 27 July 2015).
67. CLSAC, 'Vestry Minutes, 1673–1771', fo. 531r, 6 Nov. 1729.
68. Kevin Siena, 'Contagion, Exclusion, and the Unique Medical World of the Eighteenth-Century Workhouse: London Infirmaries in their Widest Relief', in Jonathan Reinartz and Leonard Schwarz (eds), *Medicine and the Workhouse* (Rochester, NY, 2013), 20–2.
69. Kevin P. Siena, *Venereal Disease, Hospitals, and the Urban Poor London's 'Foul Wards,' 1600–1800* (Rochester, NY, 2004), 140.
70. Hackney Library Services, Rose Lipman Library, 'St Leonard Shoreditch, Vestry Minutes, 1727–1771', P/L/1, 13 Aug. 1728, 13.
71. *Parochial Tyranny* (2nd edn, 1727), 34.
72. *Workhouse Cruelty: Workhouses Turn'd Goals*.
73. LMA, St Giles Workhouse Admissions and Discharge Register 1727–1729, X020/055, n.p., 30 Dec. 1729.
74. *Parochial Tyranny* (2nd edn, 1727), 34.
75. *Daily Post* (London), 18 Sept. 1731; and British Library, Sloane MS 4078, fo.159, 'Report on the Autopsy of Margaret Whistle, 10 September 1731'.
76. *Hints and Cautions for the information of the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the Parishes of St Giles in the Fields and St George Bloomsbury* (London, 1797), 6.
77. The physical stoicism and relative lack of regard for material wealth in the *Cruelty* seems to parallel the character of the suffering described in Ch. 5 in this volume by Michael J. Braddick, and the plebeian indifference to material objects highlighted by Sara Pennell in Ch. 10.
78. Jerry White, 'Pain and Degradation in Georgian London: Life in the Marshalsea Prison', *History Workshop Journal* 67(1) (2009). For St Botolph without Aldersgate, see *The Report of the Committee Appointed by a General Vestry of the Inhabitants of the Parish of St Botolph without Aldersgate, London: February 22d 1732. With some Methods Proposed to Prevent Abuses for the Future* (London, 1733). A version with extensive manuscript annotations by William Freeman, the curate, is reproduced as one of two copies available through Eighteenth-Century Collections Online. See *Report of the Committee Appointed*, image 98. See also *Remarks upon a Pamphlet, Called The Report of the Committee, &c.* (1733); and Hitchcock and Shoemaker, *London Lives*, 149.
79. *Ibid.* 136–93.

